

**Chapter 29**  
**The Centerpiece of Nazi Racial Legislation: The Nuremberg Laws**  
**(1935)**  
Nazi German Government

**Introduction**

The guiding ideology of the Nazi movement was provided, of course, by Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) and outlined in his *Mein Kampf* (a hybrid memoir and political manifesto that he dictated in prison following the failed attempt to overthrow the Bavarian state government in 1924). In addition to his virulent hatred of the Versailles settlement, Hitler emphasized two main tenets: lebensraum (living space) and racial purity. His fixation on racial purity derived from his early introduction to social Darwinism and anti-Semitism in Vienna before World War I. Hitler believed that the racially superior Germanic race was being polluted by intermarriage with non-Germans, by definition inferior, especially Jews. Moreover, the "inferior races" were reproducing at a higher rate than were the Germans. This is the genesis of his determination not only to annihilate the Jews (and others) but also to increase the size of the racially pure German population. The Jews were particularly targeted by Hitler and the Nazis with if not positive support at least passive acceptance by a substantial portion of the German population. Throughout the 1920s, gangs of Nazis ("Brown Shirts") frequently and viciously attacked Jews, both in their person and their property. Once the Nazis were in power, attacks on Jews became more legalistic: Jews were excluded from government jobs and licensed professions (law, medicine, etc.), and ultimately stripped of their German citizenship. The Nuremberg Laws, which defined who a Jew was, were a major step on the path to the Final Solution, as Hitler's plan to eradicate European Jewry was known. The Holocaust that ensued claimed the lives of six million Jews.

**Questions to Consider**

- In these laws, how do the Nazis define who a Jew is? Why?
- How do the Nazis intend to purify German blood?
- How does this legislation conform to Hitler's racial theories? How does it conform to social Darwinism?

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**Article 5**

1. A Jew is anyone who descended from at least three grandparents who were racially full Jews. Article 2, par. 2, second sentence will apply.
2. A Jew is also one who descended from two full Jewish parents, if: (a) he belonged to the Jewish religious community at the time this law was issued, or who joined the community later; (b) he was married to a Jewish person, at the time the law was issued, or married one subsequently; (c) he is the offspring from a marriage with a Jew, in the

sense of Section 1, which was contracted after the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor became effective; (d) he is the offspring of an extramarital relationship, with a Jew, according to Section 1, and will be born out of wedlock after July 31, 1936.

## **Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor of 15 September 1935**

Thoroughly convinced by the knowledge that the purity of German blood is essential for the further existence of the German people and animated by the inflexible will to safe-guard the German nation for the entire future, the Reichstag has resolved upon the following law unanimously, which is promulgated herewith:

### **Section 1**

1. Marriages between Jews and nationals of German or kindred blood are forbidden. Marriages concluded in defiance of this law are void, even if, for the purpose of evading this law, they are concluded abroad...

**Section 2** Relation[s] outside marriage between Jews and nationals of German or kindred blood are forbidden.

**Section 3** Jews will not be permitted to employ female nationals of German or kindred blood in their household.

### **Section 4**

1. Jews are forbidden to hoist the Reich and national flag and to present the colors of the Reich...

### **Section 5**

1. A person who acts contrary to the prohibition of section 1 will be punished with hard labor.
2. A person who acts contrary to the prohibition of section 2 will be punished with imprisonment or with hard labor.
3. A person who acts contrary to the provisions of sections 3 or 4 will be punished with imprisonment up to a year and with a fine or with one of these penalties...